

## ACR 162 (Beall) – FACT SHEET

### DISABILITY HISTORY WEEK

#### BACKGROUND

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A growing number of states are taking the important step of promoting understanding and awareness of disability history and the disability rights movement by designating a week each year to acknowledge the role and contributions of people with disabilities in society.

People with disabilities—in California and throughout the U.S.—have a long history of neglect, mistreatment, and exclusion. In the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the California Legislature became recognized as a leader in addressing and correcting those abuses, and Californians with disabilities played a major leadership role in establishing the national disability rights movement.

Change has been significant but there's still a long way to go. Too many public buildings and private places of business remain inaccessible. Negative attitudes, false stereotypes and stigma associated with disability are still prevalent. Discrimination in employment, housing, and public and private programs and services—both intentional and unintentional—is still widespread.

Change comes with increased information and awareness. Attitudes and behavior change when education begins at an early age.

Assembly Member Jim Beall, Jr., the author of ACR 162, notes that "any history of the fight for civil rights in America is incomplete without including the struggles of people with disabilities for equality. Their stories need to be told. People with disabilities will not be fully accepted as equal, contributing

members of the community unless our children's education promotes an understanding and awareness of disability history and the disability rights movement."

#### THIS RESOLUTION

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ACR 162 is part of a national youth-led movement, and is the result of a drive launched by youth advocates in California. It acknowledges the significant gains people with disabilities have made in overcoming painful discrimination and exclusion from our communities, and serves as a reminder that the fight for equal access continues.

ACR 162 designates the second week in October of each year as Disability History Week. It encourages schools, public and private institutions of higher education, state and local agencies, and private businesses to observe Disability History Week by dedicating appropriate classroom instructional time or by coordinating inclusive activities during the week to provide opportunities for students and the general public to learn more about the disability community and to celebrate and honor its role in contemporary American society.

The timing of the resolution is appropriate. July 26, 2010 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark federal civil rights law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and October, when Disability History Week would be observed, is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

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